

O 281147Z MAR 97
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5862
INFO AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
AMCONSUL JEDDAH
AMEMBASSY MBABANE
AMEMBASSY RIYADH
USMISSION USVIENNA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE
USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL
AMEMBASSY ALMATY
DIA WASHDC
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//FPA J5//
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ISLAMABAD 002533

DEPT FOR SA/PAB AND EUR/CEN; LONDON FOR POL/TUELLER; PARIS FOR
POL/RAVELING; ROME FOR POL/DEMPSEY; MBABANE FOR MALINOWSKI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 3/28/07
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: THE ENIGMATIC MULLAH OMAR AND TALIBAN
DECISION-MAKING

REFS: (A) ISLAMABAD 2488
(B) 96 ISLAMABAD 10540
(C) 96 PESHAWAR 926

[1](#)1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY JOHN C. HOLZMAN, DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION. REASON: 1.5 (C) (D).

[1](#)2. (U) THIS CABLE WAS COORDINATED WITH CONSULATE PESHAWAR.

SUMMARY

[1](#)3. (C) NOT MUCH IS KNOWN ABOUT MULLAH OMAR, THE TALIBAN FOUNDER AND LEADER. HE COMES FROM A SMALL VILLAGE NEAR KANDAHAR AND HIS FAMILY, WHILE

NOT MUCH BIO-DATA

[1](#)4. (C) SHORTLY AFTER THE TALIBAN SEIZED KABUL IN SEPTEMBER 1996, THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT ANNOUNCED THAT MULLAH MOHAMMAD OMAR, THE TALIBAN FOUNDE

[1](#)5. (C) ASKED ABOUT OMAR'S BACKGROUND, HAMID KARZAI, THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE LARGE POPALZAI TRIBE, TOLD POLOFF MARCH 22 THAT OMAR CAME FROM A

FEW PUBLIC APPEARANCES

[1](#)6. (C) MULLAH MOHAMMAD OMAR IS RARELY SEEN IN PUBLIC. ONE OF THE FEW TIMES HE HAS MADE A PUBLIC APPEARANCE WAS IN APRIL, 1996, WHEN HE ACCEPTE

A RELUCTANCE TO MEET NON-MUSLIMS

[1](#)7. (C) MALANG'S REMARKS HIGHLIGHT ONE OF THE PROBLEMS IN TRYING TO GET TO KNOW MULLAH OMAR: HE DOES NOT MEET MANY NON-MUSLIMS. TO OUR KNOWLEDG

A MAN OF FEW WORDS

[1](#)8. (C) THOSE WHO HAVE MET MULLAH OMAR REMARK THAT HE IS A MAN OF DECIDEDLY FEW WORDS, AND ONE WHO KEEPS TO SIMPLE SURROUNDINGS. ON MARCH 21, I

POLITICAL BELIEFS ARE OBSCURE

[1](#)9. (C) THE LIMITED ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE AVAILABLE PROVIDES LITTLE INFORMATION ON MULLAH OMAR'S PERSONAL POLITICAL BELIEFS. MOST OBSERVERS DO NOT

TALIBAN DECISION-MAKING: OMAR AND THE SHURA

[1](#)10. (C) MOST OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT OMAR HAS A KEY, AND PROBABLY DECISIVE, ROLE IN TALIBAN DECISION-MAKING. THEY NOTE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT VIRU

COMMENT

[1](#)11. (C) WHILE REPORTS VARY OF HOW WILLING OR RELUCTANT MULLAH OMAR WAS TO ACCEPT THE TITLE "AMIR AL-MU'MININ" FROM THE ASSEMBLED TALIBAN IN K

[1](#)12. (C) IN CONTRAST TO MANY OF THE HOLDERS OF THE TITLE IN CLASSICAL ISLAM OR TO MANY OF THE LAWLESS COMMANDERS THE TALIBAN OUSTED OR COOPTED,

[1](#)13. (C) OMAR, AS REPORTING IN OTHER CHANNELS SUGGESTS, MAY BE ADOPTING INCREASINGLY HARDLINE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE WEST AND ISSUES ABOUT WHIC

[1](#)14. (C) ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THE EMBASSY HAS ASKED WHETHER A MEETING WITH OMAR MIGHT BE POSSIBLE, BUT NOTHING HAS EVER COME OF IT. THIS IS UN

SIMONS